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United Nations Environment Assembly of the United Nations Environment Programme

United Nations Environment Assembly of the United Nations Environment Programme
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3/4. Environment and health

The United Nations Environment Assembly,

Recalling General Assembly resolution 70/1 of 25 September 2015, entitled "Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development", adopting the outcome document of the United Nations summit for the adoption of the post-2015 development agenda,

Recalling also the Rio Declaration on Environment and Development, the Johannesburg Declaration on Sustainable Development, the Plan of Implementation of the World Summit on Sustainable Development and the outcome document of the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development, entitled "The future we want",

Recalling further the report of the Executive Director of the United Nations Environment Programme for the second session of the United Nations Environment Assembly, entitled "Healthy environment, healthy people",[1]

Welcoming the entry into force of the Minamata Convention on Mercury on 16 August 2017,

Recognizing the work of the United Nations Environment Programme to promote the sound management of chemicals and waste, which contributes to the prevention of pollution,

Noting with appreciation the role of the Basel Convention on the Control of Transboundary Movements of Hazardous Wastes and Their Disposal, the Rotterdam Convention on the Prior Informed Consent Procedure for Certain Hazardous Chemicals and Pesticides in International Trade, the Stockholm Convention on Persistent Organic Pollutants, the Minamata Convention on Mercury and the Strategic Approach to International Chemicals Management in supporting pollution prevention and protecting the environment and health,

Welcoming the work of the World Health Organization on environment and health issues, such as air pollution, chemicals and waste, including on heavy metals, and antimicrobial resistance and appreciating the resolutions of the World Health Assembly related to environment and health,

Welcoming also decision XIII/6 of the Convention on Biological Diversity on biodiversity and human health,

Recognizing the essential work conducted by collaborative platforms and initiatives to protect health and the environment,

Welcoming the work of the Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services to assess the health of the world's biodiversity through thematic, regional and global assessments,

[1] UNEP/EA.2/INF/5.

Expressing our deep concern about the burden of disease from environmental risks, which according to recent estimates from the World Health Organization[2] is responsible for 23 per cent of total global deaths, and the associated costs to society,

Highlighting the findings of the 2017 report *The Lancet Commission on pollution and health* that the effects of pollution on health are underestimated in existing calculations of the global burden of disease, and that pollution, which was responsible for an estimated 9 million premature deaths in 2015, is the single largest environmental cause of disease and premature deaths in the world and causes welfare losses amounting to 6.2 per cent of global economic output, and concerned that deaths associated with ambient air and soil pollution, including pollution by chemicals, are rising,

Recognizing the important role of regional processes of health and environment, including the Asia-Pacific Regional Forum on Health and Environment, the European Environment and Health Process, the first and second African Inter-ministerial Conference on Environment and Health, the joint sessions of the Arab ministerial councils on the environment and health, and the Forum of Ministers of Environment of Latin America and the Caribbean, in contributing to regional and national policy actions and in strengthening environmental governance around the environment-health nexus,

1. *Affirms* the strong interlinkages between environment and health, including health inequalities, and the importance of addressing them jointly by implementing the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development;

2. *Reaffirms* the importance of applying the precautionary approach as set forth in principle 15 of the Rio Declaration on Environment and Development, as well as of supporting and facilitating the regular exchange of evidence and science-based knowledge;

3. *Welcomes* the growing recognition of pollution exposure as a key risk factor contributing to premature deaths from non-communicable diseases, which now account for seven in ten deaths globally,[3] and noting such acknowledgments in the report by the World Health Organization "Montevideo Roadmap 2018–2030 on NCDs as a Sustainable Development Priority", in Economic and Social Council resolution E/RES/2017/8 and in the report by the World Health Organization "Preventing Noncommunicable Diseases (NCDs) by reducing environmental risk factors";

4. *Notes* that the World Health Organization's Global Action Plan for the Prevention and Control of Non-Communicable Diseases 2013–2020, which focuses primarily on behavioural risk factors, acknowledges the role of environmental and occupational hazards as modifiable risk factors for non-communicable diseases, which underscores the need for enhanced communication between the public health and environmental communities on comprehensive approaches to addressing non-communicable diseases;

5. *Stresses* the health benefits of addressing global environmental challenges such as air, marine, water and soil pollution, chemicals exposure, waste management, climate change and biodiversity loss, and their interrelations, and the importance to health and well-being of cross-cutting and preventive approaches, including gender mainstreaming, the conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity, and ecosystem-based approaches at all stages;

6. *Requests* the Executive Director of the United Nations Environment Programme to continue to work, as appropriate, with intergovernmental regional processes on health and environment, the World Health Organization, the World Meteorological Organization, the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, the World Organization for Animal Health, the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women, the United Nations Population Fund, the Inter-Organization Programme for the Sound Management of Chemicals and other relevant organizations, as well as with the secretariats of the chemicals and waste conventions, the Strategic Approach to International Chemicals Management and the Rio conventions, on the environment and health nexus, in order to avoid duplication and improve effectiveness;

7. *Also requests* the Executive Director, in collaboration with the World Health Organization, relevant United Nations entities and stakeholders, including the private sector, and subject to the availability of resources, to continue ongoing efforts to support countries, upon request, in developing integrated environment and health policies and measures and to develop methods, tools and guidelines to promote integrated environmental and health risk assessments, building from existing work in that regard;

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[2] *Preventing disease through healthy environments: a global assessment of the burden of disease from environmental risks*, World Health Organization, 2016, page 86.

[3] "Non-communicable Diseases Fact Sheet," World Health Organization, updated June 2017. Available from http://www.who.int/mediacentre/factsheets/fs355/en/.

8. *Encourages* member States and stakeholders to continue engaging, as appropriate, in the work of ongoing intergovernmental regional processes on health and environment in addressing the health and environment nexus to spearhead the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals;

I
Chemicals and waste

9. *Urges* member States to intensify efforts to achieve by 2020 the goal for the environmentally sound management of chemicals and all wastes throughout their life cycle, which is contained in the Sustainable Development Goals as an essential cross-cutting issue for the achievement of sustainable development and the protection of human health and the environment, underlining the importance of the Strategic Approach to International Chemicals Management and the overall orientation and guidance for achieving the 2020 goal of sound management of chemicals, taking into account national capacities, and urges member States to actively engage in the intersessional process considering the Strategic Approach and the sound management of chemicals and waste beyond 2020;

10. *Underlines* the importance for human and environmental health, including biodiversity, of avoiding and minimizing the risks posed by harmful chemicals in products and materials, ensuring their safe use throughout their life cycle, including their environmentally sound reuse, recycling and other recovery, or disposal;

11. *Encourages* Governments and relevant actors that have not yet done so and in the light of national circumstances to develop, adopt and implement effective measures and, as appropriate, national legislation or regulations aimed at minimizing the risks posed by chemicals, including heavy metals, endocrine disruptors and pesticides, in particular to pregnant women, infants and children;

12. *Urges* parties to the Basel Convention, the Rotterdam Convention, the Stockholm Convention and the Minamata Convention to implement those conventions and invites non-parties to consider joining them;

13. *Invites* member States to increase awareness of the risks posed to human, animal and environmental health from the improper use of fertilizers and pesticides and to promote measures to address them;

14. *Invites* Governments, intergovernmental organizations, the private sector, non-governmental organizations and academia to further develop and implement communication strategies on the risks caused by chemical products and waste and to foster and facilitate access to information on those risks;

15. *Recalls* the shared responsibility of producers and downstream users throughout the value chain and encourages all relevant actors to implement the sound management of chemicals throughout their life cycle, including through developing higher standards and voluntary commitments, and strengthening efforts, for example under the Responsible Care programme, the Global Product Strategy and other relevant programmes and strategies, in accordance with the Strategic Approach to International Chemicals Management and its overall orientation and guidance;

16. *Requests* the Executive Director to present a report on the environmental and health impacts of pesticides and fertilizers and ways of minimizing them, given the lack of data in that regard, in collaboration with the World Health Organization, the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations and other relevant organizations by the fifth session of the United Nations Environment Assembly;

17. *Notes* that the impacts of the long-term application of pesticides on human and environmental health, particularly if they are persistent or bioaccumulative, are not well known, and therefore requests the Executive Director, subject to the availability of resources, and in cooperation with the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations and the World Health Organization, to encourage research institutions that undertake studies in those areas, including national institutions, to share widely the results of related peer-reviewed epidemiological and other relevant studies, including environmental monitoring and assessment;

II
Climate

18. *Recognizes* the substantial risks posed by climate change to health and welcomes the efforts undertaken to address climate change, including under the Paris Agreement adopted under the

United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, as essential contributions to improve health;

19. *Also recognizes* the likely increased risks of vector-borne diseases due to climate change, noting the documented increased risks of some vector-borne diseases and the lower scientific certainty associated with the risks of other vector-borne diseases, and the need for a preventive approach and integrated collaboration between the United Nations Environment Programme and the World Health Organization in that regard;

20. *Notes* the Ministerial Declaration on "Health, Environment and Climate Change" promulgated at the 22nd session of the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change held in Marrakech, Morocco and invites member States to also consider following up on the issues addressed in the declaration, inter alia at the next meeting of the World Health Assembly;

21. *Requests* the Executive Director to regularly report to the Committee of Permanent Representatives on the ongoing consultations between the World Health Organization, the United Nations Environment Programme, the World Meteorological Organization and the secretariat of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change on joint activities on climate change, environment and health, including on the preparation of a joint plan;

22. *Also requests* the Executive Director, subject to the availability of resources, to assess the health co-benefits of its current climate-change-related projects, notably for vulnerable groups, and to report on the results of that work to the Committee of Permanent Representatives;

III
Biodiversity

23. *Recognizes* that biodiversity loss is a health risk multiplier, including by aggravating environmental challenges, and underlines in addition the benefits for health and well-being in protecting and restoring biodiversity, ecosystems and their services;

24. *Also recognizes* that human, animal, plant and ecosystem health are interdependent, and emphasizes in that regard the value of the "One Health" approach, an integrated approach that fosters cooperation between environmental conservation and the human health, animal health and plant health sectors;

25. *Encourages* member States and invites relevant organizations to mainstream the conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity to enhance ecosystem resilience, including by taking actions to halt biodiversity loss, and to promote coordination between policies and actions aimed at improving biodiversity conservation, food safety and human health as an important safeguard for current and future health and human well-being focusing on relevant sectors;

26. *Requests* the Executive Director to include human health factors in its projects on ecosystem valuation and accounting and, subject to the availability of resources, to assess the health co-benefits of its current biodiversity-related projects and to report on the results of that work to the Committee of Permanent Representatives;

27. *Encourages* member States to facilitate dialogue between agencies responsible for biodiversity and those responsible for health and other sectors across all levels of government to consider relevant health and biodiversity linkages in developing and updating relevant national programmes, policies, strategies and plans, and in various environmental and health assessments to strengthen national monitoring capacities and data collection and to develop interdisciplinary education, training, capacity-building and research programmes;

28. *Also encourages* member States and the Executive Director, in cooperation with all relevant stakeholders, to raise awareness of the negative impacts on wildlife of chemical pollutants, including the risks associated with the use and impacts of agro-chemicals and animal drugs, as well as the dangers to the environment of lead in ammunition, and to encourage research regarding alternatives to such chemicals and drugs that are toxic to wildlife, as well as safety testing thereof;

IV
Antimicrobial resistance

29. *Recognizes* that antimicrobial resistance is a current and increasing threat and challenge to global health, food security and sustainable development of all countries;

30. *Welcomes* the United Nations high-level meeting of the General Assembly on antimicrobial resistance in September 2016 and its political declaration that raised awareness of

antimicrobial resistance at the highest political level and reaffirmed the World Health Organization's Global Action Plan on Antimicrobial Resistance, which was prepared in collaboration with the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations and the World Organization for Animal Health and adopted at the sixty-eighth World Health Assembly, held in May 2015, as the blueprint for action; and also welcomes the efforts and investments of the World Health Organization, other United Nations entities and member States, including national action plans developed in accordance with the five overarching strategic objectives of the World Health Organization's Global Action Plan, and the participation of the United Nations Environment Programme in the United Nations Interagency Coordinating Group on Antimicrobial Resistance;

31. *Underlines* the need to further understand the role of environmental pollution in the development of antimicrobial resistance, the limited availability, tools for and use of environmental surveillance of anthropogenic antimicrobials, and the limited understanding of the long-term effects of antimicrobials in the environment to the health of humans, animals, plants and ecosystems;

32. *Notes* that human, animal and plant health and the environment are interconnected and that addressing the development and spread of antimicrobial resistance effectively requires a holistic and multisectoral approach;

33. *Requests* the Executive Director to work in close collaboration with the World Health Organization, the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, the World Organization for Animal Health and all other relevant organizations, academia, the private sector and civil society to support efforts by member States to identify and characterize the human and animal health risk, based on the "One Health" approach and in line with the World Health Organization's Global Action Plan on Antimicrobial Resistance, as well as the risk to biodiversity and ecosystems arising from anthropogenic antimicrobial resistance in the environment;

34. *Also requests* the Executive Director, in collaboration with the World Health Organization, the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, the World Organization for Animal Health, the Inter-Organization Programme for the Sound Management of Chemicals, the Strategic Approach to International Chemicals Management and the Interagency Coordination Group on Antimicrobial Resistance, and subject to the availability of resources, to prepare by the fifth session of the United Nations Environment Assembly a report on the environmental impacts of antimicrobial resistance and the causes for the development and spread of resistance in the environment, including the gaps in understanding of those impacts and causes;

35. *Encourages* member States to consider, as part of evidence-based environmental policymaking, putting in place measures, as nationally appropriate, to effectively manage waste and wastewater to minimize their contribution to antimicrobial resistance through environmental contamination, including that applicable to municipalities, the agricultural industry, health-care facilities, manufacturers of antibiotics, household detergent waste and heavy metals;

V

Sustainable consumption and production

36. *Underlines* that sustainable consumption and production, resource efficiency, life cycle approaches, sustainable finance and other cross-cutting approaches, including those supported by various Governments, such as the circular economy, sustainable materials management and reduction, reuse and recycling, provide key system-wide and preventive solutions to tackle pollution and thereby improve health and the environment synergistically;

37. *Welcomes* the report by the International Resource Panel entitled *Assessing global resource use: A systems approach to resource efficiency and pollution reduction*; underlines that environmental impacts, including pollution, cannot be mitigated effectively by focusing on emissions abatement alone; calls for the development of strategies to enhance resource efficiency along the full life cycle of products; welcomes further work of the International Resource Panel on the status and trends of natural resource use and management and its links with pollution and other environmental impacts, as well as on the identification of options for enhancing sustainable management of natural resources; and encourages the International Resource Panel to make available reports to be considered, as relevant, at the sessions of the United Nations Environment Assembly;

38. *Recommends* the inclusion of a cross-cutting monitored indicator on health and well-being impacts in the Indicators of Success for the 10-Year Framework of Programmes on Sustainable Consumption and Production Patterns;

39. *Requests* the Executive Director, in collaboration with the World Health Organization and other United Nations entities, to identify opportunities for and promote sustainable lifestyles and

sustainable consumption and production patterns that would benefit the environment and human health through, inter alia, the promotion of public health campaigns;

40. *Emphasizes* the importance of education, lifelong learning and raising public awareness, notably through measures aimed at providing product sustainability information in order to stress the shared responsibility of all stakeholders including industry and allow informed choices by consumers; notes in that regard the newly launched Guidelines for Providing Product Sustainability Information; and calls on member States to strengthen efforts in the areas of education and, together with the private sector, as appropriate, in training, public awareness, public participation, public access to information and cooperation with regards to linkages between health and environment;

41. *Requests* the Executive Director to present a report to the United Nations Environment Assembly at its fourth session on the implementation of the present resolution.